

NEBRASKA BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM

Description and Guidelines

Introduction

- The Nebraska Buffer Strip Program (NBSP) was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 1998. The program encourages landowners to establish buffer strips, specifically filter strips and riparian forest buffers, along vulnerable surface water resources. Buffer strips are an effective means of reducing sediments and other pollutants in runoff. Funding for the program is from a fee assessed on pesticides registered in Nebraska.

Eligible Areas

- Land eligible for enrollment in this program is cropland (in annual crops or legumes as part of a rotation) adjacent to perennial streams, seasonal streams, wetlands, permanent bodies of water, or existing buffer strips established after January 1, 1996. The area of the streams, wetlands, and permanent bodies of water are not eligible for enrollment except that three-dot blue line seasonal streams on USGS quadrangle maps that are cropped may be eligible for out of channel flow filter strips.
- Fields adjacent and parallel to the area to be buffered must be cropped.
- Perennial streams are any solid blue line on USGS quadrangle maps or other streams with perennial flow that are verified on-site.
- Seasonal streams are any three-dot blue line on USGS quadrangle maps or any areas of concentrated flow with a defined bed and bank that has either a scoured bottom (from normal flow) or hydrophytic vegetation.
- Wetlands are any wetlands that meet permanently flooded, intermittently exposed, semipermanently flooded, or seasonally flooded criteria. The wetlands protected by buffer strips cannot be cropped during the life of the contract.
- Permanent bodies of water are surface water bodies, such as lakes or ponds, that provide water cover throughout the year.

Payment Rates

- For non-irrigated cropland that is not enrolled in CRP, the NBSP payment rate per acre shall equal 120% of the CRP weighted average soil rental rate plus \$5 minus payments from any other source. (The CRP weighted average soil rental rate is the amount calculated before the incentive and maintenance rate are added.) In no case, may the payment from all sources exceed \$150 per acre.
- For irrigated cropland, whether enrolled in CRP and/or any other program, the NBSP payment rate per acre shall equal \$150 minus payments received from all other sources.

Deadlines

- Funding availability for new applications is reviewed annually near the start of each calendar year, however, applications may be submitted any time.

Process

1. The landowner works with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on tentative buffer strip locations.
2. The landowner submits the completed application to the Natural Resources District (NRD).
3. The NRD and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) consider the application.
4. If approved, the landowner enters into a formal agreement with the NRD.
5. The landowner establishes and maintains the buffer strip according to NRCS FOTG practice requirements.

General Terms

1. The contract length cannot be less than five or more than ten years.
2. Eligible buffer strips are filter strips (NRCS FOTG practice 393) and riparian forest buffers (NRCS FOTG practice 391).
3. The established vegetation must meet NRCS FOTG practice requirements.
4. Limited haying and grazing is allowed provided it meets NRCS FOTG practice requirements.
5. Minimum width is 20 feet for filter strips and 55 feet for riparian forest buffers (35 feet must be trees and 20 feet must be grass) unless NRCS FOTG practice requirements are greater.
6. Maximum width is 100 feet for buffer strips unless NRCS FOTG practice requirements are greater. For streams, the maximums apply to each side of the stream.
7. Minimum size per application is one acre.
8. Failure to maintain the buffer strip according to contract requirements may result in forfeiture of past and future payments.
9. Buffer strips will be subject to compliance checks by NRD and/or NDA staff.

NEBRASKA BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM
Application for Participation

Name of Landowner: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Social Security Number: _____ or Tax Identification Number: _____

Natural Resources District: _____ County: _____

Farm Number: _____ Tract Number: _____

Site Information

Site	Section	Township	Range	A	B	C	D	E	F
				Filter Strip Acres	Riparian Forest Buffer Acres	Stream Length	Total Buffer Length	Non-irrigated Acres	Irrigated Acres
1									
2									
3									
4									
Totals									

- A. Enter acres offered in filter strips. (Note: A + B = E + F)
- B. Enter acres offered in riparian forest buffer.
- C. Enter length of stream protected by buffer or distance around wetlands or permanent bodies of water.
- D. Enter total length of buffers (for streams with buffers on both sides, total each side of the stream).
- E. Enter acres of non-irrigated cropland.
- F. Enter acres of irrigated cropland (assessed for tax purposes as irrigated).

Contract Length Requested = _____ years – (minimum of five years and maximum of ten years)

Rental Payments Received from Other Sources (does not include buffer establishment cost-share)

Enter \$/acre/year, practice establishment date, and contract expiration date for each source. If none, check here _____
(CRP includes the weighted average soil rental rate plus the 20 percent incentive plus the \$5 maintenance rate.)

CRP	\$/acre/year _____	Estab. Date _____	Contract expiration date _____
NRD	\$/acre/year _____	Estab. Date _____	Contract expiration date _____
Other (list) _____	\$/acre/year _____	Estab. Date _____	Contract expiration date _____
Total Dollars	\$/acre/year _____		

Required Attachments

- Aerial photo – Identify the boundary of each buffer strip in ink. For buffer strips adjacent to wetlands, NRCS wetland determination must be delineated on the photo. List the length, average width, and acres for each buffer strip on the photo. Highlight each buffer strip with a yellow highlighter. A yellow highlighter facilitates any needed photocopying.
- USGS quadrangle map – With a yellow highlighter, highlight perennial and seasonal streams that are associated with the buffer strips. Do not put any ink or pencil marks on the USGS quadrangle maps. For streams not shown on USGS quadrangle maps, describe the conditions that make the buffer strips eligible in the remarks section below.

Remarks: _____

I certify that the above information is true, and I understand that if this application is approved, I will be required to enter into an agreement with the above named Natural Resources District.

Landowner Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participation in this program is contingent upon review and approval of this application and the availability of funds.

NEBRASKA BUFFER STRIP PROGRAM
For Office Use Only – To Be Completed by NRCS

Ranking Points Calculation

Stream Classification Points	Watershed Points
Percentage of acres adjacent to: (enter % in decimals i.e. 90% = 0.9)	Percentage of land within a priority watershed – see Nebraska Unified Watershed Assessment (enter % in decimals i.e. 90% = 0.9)
Perennial Stream = _____ x 9 = _____	8 digit HUC _____
Seasonal Stream = _____ x 6 = _____	
Wetland = _____ x 5 = _____	High Priority Category 1 watershed = _____ x 3 = _____
Perm. Water Body > 5 acres = _____ x 6 = _____	Medium Priority Category 1 watershed = _____ x 2 = _____
Perm. Water Body < 5 acres = _____ x 3 = _____	Low Priority Category 1 watershed = _____ x 1 = _____
Total Points _____	Total Points _____
New Application Point – One (1) point for buffers to be installed after the date of this application, i.e. not preexisting. _____	
Stream Classification Pts. _____ + Watershed Pts. _____ + New Application Pt. _____ = Grand Total Pts _____	

Weighted Average Soil Rental Rate Calculation
 (Complete this for non-irrigated cropland only.)

	Map Unit Symbol	Acres	CRP Soil Rental Rate	Rent
Primary		X	\$ _____ =	\$ _____
Secondary		X	\$ _____ =	\$ _____
Tertiary		X	\$ _____ =	\$ _____
	Total Acres =		Total Rent =	\$ _____
\$ _____ (Total Rent) ÷ _____ (Total Acres) = \$ _____ (Weighted Average Soil Rental Rate)				

Buffer Strip Payment Calculation

Non-irrigated Cropland without CRP (complete 1, complete 2 and 3 if applicable)

1. 1.20 X _____ (Weighted Average Soil Rental Rate) = \$ _____ + \$5.00 = \$ _____ (NBSP payment rate)
2. \$ _____ (NBSP payment rate) + \$ _____ (other payments) = _____ (total payments)
3. If total payments > \$150, then \$150 - _____ (other payments) = \$ _____ (NBSP payment rate)
 _____ (NBSP payment rate from 1 or 3 whichever applies) X _____ acres = \$ _____

Irrigated Cropland

1. NBSP maximum payment rate = \$150.00 minus the payments from any other sources
 \$150 - _____ (other payments) = \$ _____ (NBSP payment rate) X _____ acres = \$ _____

Total Annual Buffer Strip Payment = \$ _____

Remarks _____

NRCS Representative _____ Date _____

NRD Action Approved _____ Disapproved _____ returned to landowner for more information _____

NRD Representative _____ Date _____

NDA Action Approved _____ Disapproved _____ returned to landowner for more information _____

NDA Representative _____ Date _____